



ELSAH HISTORY

No. 93

Published by Historic Elsah Foundation, P. O. Box 117, Elsah, IL 62028

Summer 2007

ELSAH BUSINESSES: PAST AND PRESENT

For many years after the Village of Elsah was first established, it was not a simple thing to travel to Alton, Godfrey, or Jerseyville to shop as we do today. The village was quite isolated from centers of commerce and it needed to be self-sufficient. As years passed, the train and then the Dinky provided easier links with the outside world. When the automobile became more common, and the Great River Road opened in 1962, quick trips to shopping centers on both sides of the Mississippi River were easy and convenient.

The undated flyer on the right, which is the property of the Keller family, shows that Elsah residents were industrious and made good use of whatever opportunities came their way

In 1893 the residents of Elsah voted in prohibition and that ended a saloon trade. The village has remained dry to this day.

Currently, Elsah's business community consists of one restaurant: My Just Desserts, owned and operated by Ann Badasch; one resale shop: Jeralyn Lewitz' Jeremiah's-Elsah; and three bed and breakfast inns: The Corner Nest, with new owner Sibylle Seal, Roy and Brenda Coffman's Green Tree Inn, and Gerald Taetz' Maple Leaf Cottage Inn. Rounding out the commercial community is a United States Post Office and a Christian Science Reading Room, which is located in the one village building designed by noted architect, Bernard Maybeck.

Just outside Elsah's historic district is the widely acclaimed Crocker and Springer pottery, owned by Jan and Jonathan Wright.

Past and Present of Elsah and Vicinity.

ABOUT seven or eight years ago some of our good people decided to hold a camp meeting at or near Elsah, so it was decided to hold it at Balbs Follow, (the now Great Western Chautauqua,) from July through August, and continues every year. Finding this was the long felt want of the tired and weary city people to come up and stay two or three weeks longer, and go back to the city refreshed and anew, this being carried on several years, then the Great Western Chautauqua organized. The Company then built a fence around the grounds and charged admittance of twenty-five cents which was liberally patronized. The Company then built an amphitheatre cost \$4,000, a hotel \$2,000. The grounds were surveyed off in lots, there being such a demand for lots the grounds had to be enlarged and the purchasers of the lots have built residences of all descriptions. Elsah is about one mile from the grounds and can be reached by rail four times daily, costing five cents, and enjoy same privilege as those on ground, costing them several dollars per day. One desirous of running summer boarding house can make money fast. One lady says: "Last summer I kept ten boarders ~~at five~~ ^{at five} dollars per week and cleared \$100 cash above all expenses." Last summer the town could not accommodate half that wanted board.

PIASA BLUFF IMPROVEMENT COMPANY.

This Company seeing that Elsah was a money-making place invested \$28,000 in land and \$30,000 in hotel which is 400 feet above surface of river and is most beautiful scenery. Also last year there was something like \$20,000 spent building houses. The proposed Electric Railway running from depot through town up to the hotel. This Company has built a steam Tramway running up a high bluff 500 feet long cost \$2,400, which is a great sight. A syndicate which has purchased land of the P. B. & Co., for the purpose of building houses to rent and sell, are erecting and will erect this spring a number of buildings. Property is renting here at a rate of investment of 15 per cent, and big demand, and can be bought at reasonable prices considering there is big money in improving unimproved lots, ranging from \$50 up. It is only a short time until property will advance 50 per cent. so come and invest and reap the reward as Elsah will be the **Greatest Summer Resort in U. S.** For further information or particulars, address or call on any of the advertised list, or

RICHARD I. FRANCIS,

REAL ESTATE AGENT.

A. H. STEPHANY,

GENERAL MERCHANT.

L. H. Vanderslice,

DEALER IN

**Bottled Beer & Bass Ale,
WINES, LIQUORS, AND CIGARS.**

ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

**RICHARD I. FRANCIS,
Real Estate and
Insurance Agt.
Notary Public.**

BARGAINS in Unimproved Lots. *Correspondence Solicited.*

ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

ESTABLISHED 1869.

Isaac Haupt's,

Dealer in

FRESH FISH, ALSO FRESH AND SALT

MEATS,

of all kinds constantly on hand.

ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

Bluff Line,



**River Bank Route.
St. Louis, Alton & Springfield R. R.,**

Best Line to

Chicago, Springfield, Jerseyville, Alton & St. Louis
Save money by purchasing through tickets.

H. A. FISHER, Gen'l Mgr.

F. E. FISHER, Gen'l Pass. Agt.

SAMPLE ROOM,

THE FINEST LIQUORS AND
BEST BRANDS OF CIGARS ON HAND.

J. G. Horn,

Proprietor.

Mrs. Josephine Keller,

DEALER IN

*Fine Confectionery, Ice Cream,
Cigars, Nuts, Cakes, Candies, Fresh
Oysters and Canned Goods,*

Constantly on hand.

ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

Hiram T. Keyser,

Contractor and Builder in

Stone, Brick & Plastering,

ALL WORK ON SHORT NOTICE
IN A GOOD, WORKMANLIKE MANNER.

Elsah, Illinois.

LUMBER YARD.

CONSTANTLY ON HAND

LUMBER, LATH, PINE & CYPRUS SHINGLES,

Sash, Doors and Blinds

Furnished on short notice by

A. H. STEPHANY,

ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

MEAT MARKET,
W. M. MARSHAW,
 Dealer in
 Fresh and Salt Meats

CONSTANTLY ON HAND.
ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

❀ **RIVERSIDE HOTEL,** ❀
 REASONABLE RATES.
 Special Accommodations for
Traveling Men.
J. G. HORN, Prop.
ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

McNair Brothers,
CORN, FEED, SAW MILLS, MACHINE SHOP,
 Inventors and Manufacturers of the
Mechanical Accountant,
 Being the most Simple, Complete Adding, Subtracting,
 and Recording Machine extant.
 HARD AND SOFT COAL,
ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

❀ **A. T. Stephany,** ❀
 Dealer in
DRY GOODS
 HATS, CAPS, BOOTS AND SHOES,
 Groceries, Canned Goods, Teas, Coffees, Sugars,
 Everything that can be found in a first-class store of
GENERAL MERCHANDISE.
 ❀ Special Rates for Cash Purchases.
ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

KESLER & FRANCIS
 THE RELIABLE
 For Prices and Qualities of
 DRY GOODS, GROCERIES, BOOTS AND SHOES,
 HARDWARE,
 TINWARE, GLASSWARE AND NOTIONS.
 Country Produce a Specialty.
ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

M. Huss,
BOOT & SHOE MAKER,
 All kinds of work and repairing neatly
 and quickly executed at reasonable rates.
 CALL AND SEE ME AT
ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

Elsah Roller Mills,
ENOS T. DORON,
 PROPRIETOR.
 Manufacturer of the Celebrated
"SILVER MOON" FLOUR.
ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

BLACKSMITH SHOP,
 Work of all kinds neatly and
 quickly executed.
HORSE SHOEING,
 General Repairing, &c.
Wm. Conkinson,
ELSAH, ILLINOIS.

These business cards from Elsay's early days of commerce were collected by Eddie Keller's parents and grandparents and the original cards continue to be the property of the Keller family. Jonathan Wright, owner of Crocker and Springer Pottery, scanned these cards into his computer and has provided Historic Elsay Foundation with these replications. The cards are reproduced in this publication with the kind permission of Genie and Eddie Keller.

In Memory of Alfred E. Mack

By Ned and Paula Bradley

Al Mack is likely one of those who have done more for Elsah than many in the last half century. Born and raised in Wethersfield, Connecticut, he was already a skilled electrician, mechanic, and craftsman when he became an army lieutenant in World War II. He went ashore on Utah Beach right after D-Day and led his men north through France, Belgium and Holland to the Elbe River, where the Russians ended their westward move. Stationed in Holland, he met the hospitable Hötte family and courted their daughter Ingeborg. Inge and Al were married by war's end and spent considerable time in Europe, most memorably in Vienna, with the army of occupation restoring communications. Their two sons, Eric and Glenn, were born in Holland.

Eventually the couple came to the United States to live, first in New England. Al enrolled in the University of New Hampshire to study hotel management and culinary arts. Later he returned to the world of electrical engineering and soon became the Midwest sales representative for Universal Electric Company. In looking for the best place to settle down in the large area he was assigned to, he and Inge came to Elsah for the second time. In 1945 they had stopped here to visit Al's sister Barbara, wife of Principia College's geology professor Forbes Robertson.

Elsah's appeal couldn't be resisted. In 1958 they rented Keller's Rock House on Selma Street, where they stayed for several years. Eventually they acquired 6 Palm Street and did some remodeling. They built a three-story garage/workshop/office/and living space behind the house in the shape of a barn. Years passed, and they bought and carefully replicated the "Gothic house" on LaSalle Street, replacing all the siding, roof, flooring and windows, and adding a garage where there had been a shed. Al also worked with his son Eric in building two reproductions of lost Elsah structures, further up Palm Street.

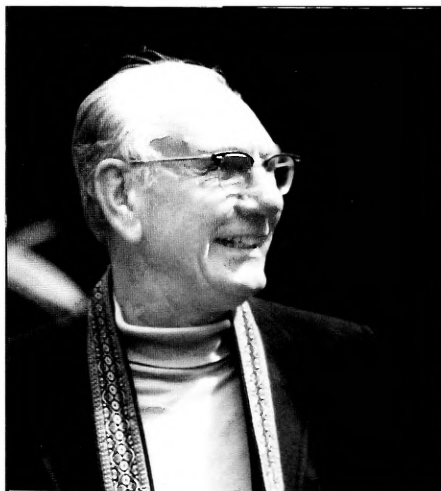
Another project of Al's was the transformation of the Maybeck gas station (now the Christian Science Reading Room) into a usable piece of Elsah charm. It became the Maybeck Gallery, which Inge ran for many years. Inge held opening receptions for local, national and international artists, and the gallery became a social gathering place for villagers and patrons.

Al served several terms as a Trustee on the Village Board. In 1975, as a trained and qualified chef and restaurateur, he was one of the three founders of the Elsah Landing Restaurant—along with son Eric and friend Dorothy Lindgren. Al was responsible not only for the basic menu but also for (again!) renovation inside the Mott Building, even making many of the fittings and furnishings. The restaurant put Elsah on the map for over twenty-five years.

Al brought back from Europe a treasury of World War II reminiscences. His stories of army life were mostly hilarious and fond, since he clearly loved and admired the men in his unit, all of whom, by the way, came home unscathed.

Besides his army stories and character sketches, Al had a store of patter songs which he performed in his dry, wry, sly way to everyone's delight. George Burns would have envied him.

Personally, one could not have imagined a better friend. Al was generous to a fault with his time, counsel, and labor. He was the model of a man of honor, a man of his word; he personified dependability, sincerity, trustworthiness, and respect for others. Elsah is poorer for his absence, but immeasurably richer for his memory and legacy. He passed away January 9, 2007.



Alfred E. Mack

Village of Elsah Museum Events...

In April Elsah's museum opened for the season. Visitors are welcome every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 through October.

The theme for this year's photography contest is "Elsah: People and Places." Ben Johnson, of St. Louis, won first place and received a \$150 purchase prize. The next issue of *Elsah History* will include pictures of the winning photo, along with the three that received special recognition, taken by Joan Vogel Baker, Gretchen Batz, and Andrea Ives. The photography exhibit opened with a reception on Saturday, July 28 and will close on Sunday, October 14.

The judge again this year was Janice Nesser-Chu, a working photographer/artist and a professor of photography at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley in Missouri. She recently won the Outstanding New Teacher Award at the college's annual Recognition Program. "New Teacher" is defined as being hired within the past five years.



Other participants in the photo contest were: George Cooke, Bob Edmunds, Kaela Gillum, Henry Hamlin, Brady Kesner, Forest Kohlburn, Robert Koropp, Rebecca Matejka McVey, Dottie Robertson, Lark Rodman, Jack Selbert, Carol Voes, Suzanne Vogel, Stuart Waller, and Kay Wood.

First Place Purchase Prize winner, Ben Johnson of St. Louis, Missouri, receives his check from Elsah's mayor, Marge Doerr.

Photo: Marie Oleson

The museum now has beautiful new copper gutters to drain away the rain water. The gutters were hand-crafted by Gary Ray of Elk Heating and Sheet Metal, who is an artist with copper.

The new restrooms, located downstairs where the village jail used to be, are open for public use, and landscaping is underway. Since there is no direct access from the museum to the restrooms, a sidewalk will soon be in place making for easier foot travel. Many thanks to Mike Pitchford for spearheading the sidewalk project, and to all those who are lending a helping hand.

Calendar of museum events:

Saturday, July 28	Reception for opening of photography exhibit and sale; 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Saturday, October 13	Annual Book and Bake sale at the museum; 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 14	Continuation of Book sale; final day for photography exhibit and sale
Sunday, October 28	Museum closes for winter

Report to Members and Friends

As the list below shows, many of our members and friends have generously supported our ongoing project to preserve Farley's Music Hall with their contributions to the Farley's Endowment Fund.

To date forty-three members and friends have donated a total of \$18,875.00. Contributions have earned an additional \$1,376.53 in interest which brings our fund total to \$20,251.53. Two members have given \$5,000, four have given \$1,000 or more, and four have given \$500 or more: Three have given \$200 or more, and seventeen have given \$100 or more. We are grateful to our members and friends for their generous response to this need. Thank you!

Lynn Adams
Helen H. Andrews
Cynthia Beavers
Edith Belote
Linda Bohaker
Paula and Ned Bradley
Sue Colletter
June and Bob Cronin
Jennifer Dyck
David Foltz
Sue and Tom Fuller
Rosemarie and Richard Gatehouse
Greatriverroad.com
Ellen and Stanley Hanold
Ed Hansell
Mary and Henry Holt, III
Wendie and Jonathan Hosmer
James Hostler
Margaret and Andrew Hyde
Adria and Ken Johnson
Betty Jeanne Johnson
Lucian Krukowski
Judy and Deane Leonard
Ute Levi
Jeri and Ed Lewitz
Phyllis Lockwood
Christine and Tim Morris
Enid Narver
Marie and Ole Oleson
Lorraine and Warren Passmore
Jane and David Pfeifer
Thomas Russell
Mary Anne and Jim Schmidt
Ann (Barnes) Simpson
Helen Sprague and Family
Carol Stookey
Kathryn and Matt Thompson
Rose and Tim Tomlinson
Alma Tripidi
Valerie and Mark Tucker
John and Terri Viner
Marian Wells
Nancy Wiley

Your continued financial support will be greatly appreciated until we reach our stated goal of \$125,000.

Four-fifths of all donations to this fund are to go into Farley's Endowment Fund, and one-fifth is to be used for critical needs. The estimated cost for the necessary repair and painting is between \$27,000 and \$32,000. Work was scheduled to begin this autumn, but has been rescheduled for next spring due to weather delays in the contractors' schedules.

Last December our annual "Home for the Holidays" activity was cancelled due to weather. The Thursday before the house tour, November 30th, the entire Elsay area was hit with an incredible ice storm, which left about four inches of ice everywhere. This was immediately followed by another four inches of snow. The village was without electricity for about a day and many other local residents were without power for five days, with bitterly cold temperatures. Gas stoves and wood fireplaces saved the day for many of us.

On December 2nd, the day of the house tour, a few unexpected visitors came to Elsay, not knowing of the cancellation, and in spite of icy roads and slick sidewalks. Villagers, whose homes were ready and decorated for the tour, opened their doors and welcomed them. The Holiday Shoppe, put together so lovingly by Ellen Hanold in her home, garnered \$500 in the sale of donated items and consignment goods. As a result of pre-tour ticket sales (refunds were offered, but in large part, refused), donations, and Holiday Shoppe sales, HEF's treasury grew by \$916.75. This money will all go toward Farley's current needs.

HEF's Activities committee is already planning for the next "Home for the Holidays." It will be on Saturday, December 1, 2007. The \$1,000 received from sponsors of the cancelled 2006 event is being held intact to cover costs for this coming December. We thank our sponsors for their patience and help: Elsay's Green Tree Inn, My Just Desserts, and Principia College, Grafton's Country Corner Fudge, Chautauqua's greatriverroad.com, and the following individuals: Tim and Joy Booth, Stan and Ellen Hanold, Steve and Cindy Ira, Ed and Jeralyn Lewitz, Al and Inge Mack, David and Jane Pfeifer, Ole and Marie Oleson, Bob and Sara Rockabrand, and one anonymous donor.

We also enjoyed wonderful benefits from our Rudolph Tandler Christmas Card fund raiser. Profit from these charming cards totaled \$764.00 after printing costs. We send our heart-felt thanks to Rudolph Tandler's daughter, Gladys Tandler Hancock, for her generous support of this project.

Marie Oleson, president

Village Happenings...

Elsah resident Bob Wilson recently returned from the National Book Critics Circle awards held in New York City. His publishing firm, MARGIE/Intuit House *Poetry Series*, won first prize for publishing Troy Jollimore's first collection of poetry titled "Tom Thomson in Purgatory." The nation's leading book critics determine the best book of poetry published over the past year. Awards are also given in other genres: Fiction, Non-Fiction, Memoir, Biography, et cetera. Bob is Editor-in Chief of MARGIE/Intuit House *Poetry Series* and MARGIE/The American Journal of Poetry. www.margiereview.com

Flowers at Farley's: Many thanks to Jean Kistler for potting the beautiful flowers on Farley's front porch. They add a warm and welcoming touch.



Village Board: Mike Pitchford has been appointed to the Village Board to complete the term of Ed Lewitz, who recently resigned. Other members of the Village Board: Mark Badasch, Cindy Ira, Merlin Lewis, Ann Modak, and Lynn Schreiber, and president (mayor) Marge Doerr.

Entrance to Elsah: The large cottonwood tree at the entrance to Elsah was removed recently. We will all miss the tree as it has stood for many years as a faithful sentinel guarding our front entrance. Sadly its removal was necessary because it had become a danger to human life and property. The Village Board is now working on redesigning the entrance road.

The Corner Nest Bed and Breakfast Inn: Sibylle Seal is the new owner of the Corner Nest Bed and Breakfast Inn. Guests will love the new and delightful décor.

Ed Lewitz: Gardens in Elsah have produced prolifically this summer. But have you seen a cucumber like this one from Ed Lewitz' patch?



On Ed's retirement from the Village Board in February he received a letter from the Mayor, which follows: "This letter is being sent to thank you for your time and efforts spent on the Board of Trustees. Your careful attention to detail was of great use to the board. Also appreciated was your watchful eye on protocol. Your gentle sense of humor was enjoyed by all on the board. We wish you well in future endeavors."

"Quilt Road Show: determining the age of quilts" was the title of Elsah's latest program on quilts sponsored by My Just Desserts. The speaker was Sharry Doenitz who shared her extensive and beautiful collection. She also estimated the age of quilts brought in by those who attended. The next program will be "The Fabric that Ties" on Friday, September 28. The speaker will be Ann Hazelwood who will share her collection of aprons.

(See <http://myjustdesserts.org> for information.)



Sharry Doenitz and Ann Badasch telling about the patterns and history of quilts.

Photo: Marie Oleson

Upcoming Activities in the Village of Elsah...

Annual Photo Exhibit and Sale — Exhibit open through October 14 in Village Museum. *Theme:* Elsah: People and Places.

1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Fridays through Sundays

Game night — Second Saturday of month. Check Post Office bulletin board for current information. October 13 is annual hot dog roast at the river. 6:00 p.m. Civic Center

Folk dances — All are welcome, \$5/person; \$15 max per family, student half-price with ID; Third Saturday of month except December. 7:00 p.m. Farley's Music Hall

Quilt Retreat — Learn to make a "Double Wedding Ring" quilt with an easy piecing method. Sponsored by My Just Desserts. See www.myjustdesserts.org Or call 618-462-5881/618-374-1607 for information September 26, 27, 28. Civic Center

The Fabric that Ties — Trivia and history of aprons. \$20/person. Sponsored by My Just Desserts. Friday, September 28 11:00 to 2:00 Civic Center

Welcome...

...to Noreen and Jim Bayer — 7 Valley Street
 ...to Dede and Bernardo Brumetti — 47 Mill Street
 ...to Amy Cloud and Jose Lara — 15 LaSalle Street
 ...to Christine and Cody Phillis — 18 Palm Street
 ...to Diane and Gerald Hamlet — 2 Alma Street
 ...to Kerry and Mike McEly — 122A Cemetery Road
 ...to Mary Marvin — 59 Mill Street
 ...to Christine and Robert Phillips — 2 Maple Street
 ...to Gerry Rock and Tom Harris — 16 Palm Street
 ...to Sibylle Seal — 2 Elm Street (The Corner Nest)
 ...to Sun Smith-Foret — Riverview House

and a move within the village...

...Bonnie and Emilio Castroman — Penn Street extension

Welcome to new members of HEF: John and Janet Hampton, Tom Harris and Gerry Rock, Susan Mundle, Carolee Nichols, Melanie Strowmatt, Janet Workman, Bronna and Bob Yeates.

New Life Members: Robert and Christine Phillips.

Autumn Market — A large variety of fall crafts and other interesting and unique items for sale.

Daily, September 27 through October 14

Farley's Music Hall

Writer's Workshop — Writing from personal experience: Finding God's story in your story. Register with Roy or Brenda Coffman, 374-2821. \$25 inc. lunch and materials. Saturday, Nov. 10. 8:30 – 4:00 Farley's Music Hall

Home for the Holidays — House tour. \$15/person; Saturday, December 1; followed by caroling procession and tree lighting in Selma Square. 3:00 to 5:45 for house tour. Holiday Shoppe in museum, 26 LaSalle Street, open 1:00 to 5:45

Christmas Sing

Sunday, December 16, sponsored by Elsah's two churches and Historic Elsah Foundation. 3:00 p.m. In 2007 it starts in the Christian Science Church, moves to the Methodist Church, and ends with a reception in Farley's Music Hall.

and Farewell...

...to Diane Block — 2 Alma Street
 ...to Judi and Bob Doerr — 3 Elm Street
 (The Corner Nest)
 ...to Joy and Scott Hanold — 7 Valley Street
 ...to Nancy and Bill Killion — 2 Maple Street
 ...to Traci and Vince Millen — 47 Mill Street
 ...to Enid Narver — 3 Elm Street
 ...to Amy Trevelyan — 86 Mill Street
 ...to Bert and Judi Vandermark — 18 Palm Street

Historic Elsah Foundation Board:

President	Marie Oleson
Vice President	Paula Bradley
Secretary	Tim Tomlinson
Treasurer	Cathy Barlow
Board members:	
Ann Badasch	Mary Anne Schmidt
Jeralyn Lewitz	Jeanne Shultz
Inge Mack	Gerald Taetz
Jane Pfeifer	Susan Young
Board Member Emerita:	Marie Cresswell

ISSN 1552-9002

Elsah History is published by Historic Elsah Foundation. Subscription is with membership. Editor: Marie Oleson
 Membership for 2008:

Basic \$25
 Supporting \$50
 Patron \$100
 Life \$500

Please send memberships or letters to the editor to:
 P.O. Box 117, Elsah, IL 62028

The purposes of Historic Elsah Foundation are stated in the Articles of Incorporation (1971):

"...the preservation and enhancement of the historic buildings, houses, architecture and culture of the Village of Elsah, Illinois, the historic areas, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and periodicals regarding the Village, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the general public of the historical and educational value of the Village."